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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes an assessment of the extent to which Manitoba schools are meeting the learning objectives for speaking and writing skills specified for senior (secondary) levels 1 and 4 in the basic French curriculum for the province. For each level and skill area, a random sample of students representing urban and rural school populations was selected. Measurement instruments were developed, piloted, and administered to each subject group in the spring of 1993. Results were analyzed and are presented here in summary form. It is concluded that speaking skills were met satisfactorily at the senior 4 level, but that objectives at other levels in speaking and writing skills were not met. However, despite the poor results, it is felt that the basic French teaching situation in Manitoba has positive aspects that can be emphasized to improve student learning. Specific recommendations are made for administration at the provincial level, for French teachers, to school divisions and principals, to faculties of education, and to students concerning the curriculum, instructional materials, assessment and evaluation, professional development, and the national core French study. (Contains three references.) (MSE)

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BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE

Basic French Assessment
Speaking and Writing Skills
Senior 1 and 4
1993
Summary Report

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BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE

BASIC FRENCH ASSESSMENT
Speaking and Writing Skills
Senior 1 and 4
1993
Summary Report

September 1995

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The educators mentioned above contributed in one or more of the following tasks:

- development of the measurement instruments,
- testing of the measurement instruments,
- administering and marking the oral test,
- correcting the written test,
- evaluating the results,
- writing the reports.

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Mike BIGELOW	Erika KINN
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Odile DUBÉ	Norbert PHILIPPE
Henri GRIMARD	Patricia THIBODEAU

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Foreword

In the Spring of 1993, representative samples of Senior 1 and 4 students from Manitoba schools participated in a provincial assessment of Basic French. The assessment was performed in order to provide educators with information on the extent to which the learning objectives for speaking and writing skills as set out in the Basic French curricula were being achieved.

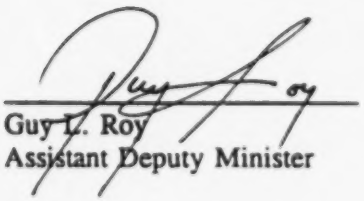
The provincial assessment of speaking and writing skills in Basic French was an initiative of the Bureau de l'éducation française. Educational Support Services was responsible for the project and involved teachers and curriculum consultants in the entire assessment process.

This *Summary Report* (available in French and English) presents the highlights of the project as well as the conclusions and recommendations that stem from it.

The Bureau de l'éducation française has also prepared a *Rapport global* (available only in French) which can be consulted by Basic French teachers who would like additional information.

The results in these reports are valid only at the provincial level. They do not contain any information regarding objectives achieved by specific schools or school divisions.

The Bureau de l'éducation française has begun revising the Basic French curricula and is using, among other factors, the information in these reports to make, if necessary, any changes. In addition, the Bureau de l'éducation française hopes that educators will find information and recommendations in this report that will help them identify their needs when implementing the Basic French curricula in their school divisions.



Guy L. Roy
Assistant Deputy Minister

Chapter One

OVERVIEW AND MAIN ASPECTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

This chapter is a summary of the main aspects of the assessment.

Main Goal of the Project

The Bureau de l'éducation française initiated this project in order to obtain information on the extent to which the learning objectives for speaking and writing skills as set out in the Basic French curricula were being met.

Project Components

The Bureau de l'éducation française collected data using measurement instruments corresponding to the following four components:

- speaking skills, Senior 1,
- speaking skills, Senior 4,
- writing skills, Senior 1,
- writing skills, Senior 4.

Population Consulted

For each project component, the Bureau de l'éducation française selected a random sample of students representing the urban and rural school population. Only the students enrolled in the 9-year program (Grade 4 to Senior 4/110 hours per year) participated in the project.

Project Phases

1991-93: Following a study of the curricula in question, a committee of educators developed measurement instruments. Some of the committee members then participated in piloting the tests.

1993: The tests were administered and corrected in the Spring of 1993.

1993-94: A committee of educators studied and interpreted the results and contributed in writing up this report.

Conclusions

The committee responsible for interpreting the results is satisfied with the speaking skills in Senior 4. However, it is not satisfied with the speaking skills in Senior 1 nor with the writing skills in Senior 1 and 4.

Despite the poor results, the committee feels that the situation in Manitoba concerning Basic French has positive aspects that can be emphasized in order to improve students' abilities.

The committee would like to stress that these results are only valid at a provincial level and do not necessarily correspond to what is occurring in every Basic French class in Manitoba.

Recommendations

The recommendations made by the committee evolve from the test results and questions raised by the assessment project. They are directed at the Bureau de l'éducation française, Basic French teachers, school divisions and principals of the schools involved, faculties of education and students. The recommendations deal with the following elements:

- the curriculum,
- didactic materials,
- assessment and evaluation,
- professional development,
- the *National Core French Study*.

All individuals involved in the teaching and learning of Basic French in Manitoba are invited to look at their situation and implement the recommendations that concern them.

Chapter Two

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

The committee in charge of developing measurement instruments determined the evaluation criteria using the curricula's general and terminal objectives.

General Objectives

At the end of the program, Grade 12 [Senior 4] graduates should:

1. be able to understand and be understood in simple conversations;

2. have mastered approximately 100 fundamental structures and a vocabulary of 3000 to 5000 words and have acquired good pronunciation;

3. be able to read current texts on subjects of personal interest, using a dictionary if necessary;

4. have some knowledge of the culture of Francophone communities in Canada and elsewhere in the world;

5. be able to study French at a higher level if the desire or need to do so arises later in life.

(Translation of an extract from page 10 of the Senior 2, 3 and 4 curriculum.)

The Terminal Objectives of the Basic French Curricula

SPEAKING SKILLS, Senior 1	SPEAKING SKILLS, Senior 4
The curriculum should assist students in developing and maintaining oral confidence. In keeping with the limits of the curriculum, at the end of Senior 1, students should: 1. correctly pronounce and articulate all sounds of the French language; respect proper intonation, sentence rhythm and liaisons; 2. actively participate in communication without fear of making errors; 3. express themselves in: - learning contexts, - situations demanding new combinations of structures and vocabulary already acquired, - presentations prepared in advance; 4. express themselves individually. (Translation of an extract from page 9 of the Grades 7, 8 and Senior 1 curriculum.)	The Basic French curriculum (9-year) should assist students in developing and maintaining oral confidence. In keeping with the limits of the curriculum, at the end of Senior 4 students should: 1. correctly pronounce and articulate all sounds of the French language; respect proper intonation, sentence rhythm and liaisons; 2. actively participate in communication without fear of making errors; 3. make themselves understood in everyday situations (eg. asking for information, giving opinions, justifying an argument, and so on); 4. actively participate in a conversation with persons whose mother tongue is French. (Translation of an extract from page 12 of the Senior 2, 3 and 4 curriculum.)
WRITING SKILLS, Senior 1	**WRITING SKILLS, Senior 4**
In keeping with the limits of the curriculum, at the end of Senior 1 students should: 1. correctly spell vocabulary and structures already heard and read; 2. construct simple and correct sentences using structures and vocabulary learned; 3. express themselves in writing by adapting ideas to the structures and vocabulary at their disposal; 4. write a paragraph following precise directions. (Translation of an extract from page 10 of the Grades 7, 8 and Senior 1 curriculum.)	In keeping with the limits of the curriculum, at the end of Senior 4, students should: 1. correctly spell vocabulary and structures already heard and read; 2. construct simple and correct sentences using structures and vocabulary learned; 3. be able to write personal or formal letters, complete forms; 4. write a descriptive or narrative passage by adapting ideas to structures and vocabulary; 5. be able to comment on a newspaper article or literary passage. (Translation of an extract from page 13 of the Grades Senior 2, 3 and 4 curriculum.)

Chapter Three

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Criterion-referenced Measurement

In order to understand the results presented in this chapter, it is necessary to remember the goal of this project: **to obtain information on the extent to which the objectives of the Basic French curricula are being met.** The goal was not to compare students' results but rather to **determine the performance of students relative to the objectives of the curriculum.**

For example, we wanted to know:

At what level are the students?
Are they meeting curriculum requirements?
What are the students' strengths?
What do they still need to learn?

Criterion-referenced measurement is more appropriate in answering these questions than norm-referenced measurement and was therefore chosen for this assessment project.

Descriptive Scales

Using the terminal objectives of the curricula, the members of the committee in charge of developing measurement instruments identified one or more evaluation criteria for each part of the tests and created descriptive scales. These scales were used when correcting the tests in order to note the performance of each student with regard to the evaluation criteria.

For each criterion, committe members described the performance of students who met curriculum requirements. These requirements correspond to an acceptable performance level and take into account the criteria, the assessment situation and the student's grade level. This is the performance standard and appears in the descriptive scales as "P" (performance standard).

Each of the descriptive scales presents at least two types of student performance: one indicates a passing score (the performance standard) and the other a failing score. Where possible the committee also developed up to four performance descriptions - from the student who does not meet curriculum requirements to the student who exceeds them.

The committee used the following symbols to identify student performance:

P+ The student exceeds curriculum requirements.

P The student meets curriculum requirements (performance standard).

P- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has some difficulty.

P-- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has a great deal of difficulty.

As an example, following are two descriptive scales developed for the Speaking Skills test in Senior 1.

Part three: Role-playing

Description of the task: The student asks questions in an interview context.

Criterion 1: Ideas communicated

P+	P Performance Standard	P-	P--
The student asks more than five questions in French. All are clear and complete. He or she reacts to the questions of the candidate.	The student asks at least five questions in French. The majority are clear and complete.	a) The student asks questions using a little English. OR b) The student asks at least five questions in French but the majority are not clear or are incomplete.	a) The student asks questions in English. OR b) The student asks less than five questions.

Criterion 2: Intonation

P Performance Standard	P-	P--
Interrogative intonation always appropriate: the student uses good intonation for at least 5 questions.	Interrogative intonation sometimes inappropriate: the student uses good intonation for 2, 3 or 4 questions.	Interrogative intonation rarely or never appropriate: the student never uses good intonation or only uses it for one question.

Interpretation of Results

The committee responsible for interpreting the results determined the minimum percentage of students in the province who needed to meet or exceed curriculum requirements (the performance standard) for each criterion in order for the results to be considered ACCEPTABLE. The committee then compared this acceptable level with the actual results.

The ACCEPTABLE level should not be confused with the ideal level which teachers should aim for and which means that all students have met the criteria.

The committee considered each criterion separately because they do not all have the same degree of difficulty. Therefore, the ACCEPTABLE level was different for each criterion that the test assessed. In addition, other circumstances led the committee to set different expectations for each criterion: the tasks proposed to the students during assessment situations, performance standards, the various situations that the students are familiar with, information, expectations and comments of the test markers, etc.

The following chart summarizes how the committee determined its degree of satisfaction:

The actual results are higher than the ACCEPTABLE level. **The percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements was greater than the committee expected.**	**The results are very satisfactory.**
The actual results are at an ACCEPTABLE level. **The percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements meets the committee's expectations.**	**The results are satisfactory.**
The actual results are lower than the ACCEPTABLE level. **Not enough students met or exceeded curriculum requirements.**	**The results are unsatisfactory.**

Although the committee's interpretation is valid for the province as a whole, it is not necessarily valid at a class or school level. A teacher can set different expectations for his or her class regarding the achievement of objectives.

The following pages contain the test results and the committee's evaluation for each test. For each test and each of its parts, the reader will find

- comments of the technical committee responsible for interpreting the results,
- a table showing the percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements for each of the criteria,
- a table showing the distribution of students according to the descriptive scale.

Speaking Skills / Senior 1 / Comments of the committee responsible for interpreting the results

Overall Results

On the whole, the committee is not satisfied with the results of the Senior 1 speaking skills test. With the exception of the criteria for affirmative and negative sentence structure and intonation, an insufficient number of students achieved the performance standard for the evaluation criteria.

However, the committee is not entirely discouraged with the results. It thinks that certain elements of the test need to be reconsidered. For example, the pictures used in the second part of the test did not seem to hold the students' attention. The committee also notes that those who administered the test found several positive aspects regarding the students, despite the noted weaknesses.

In fact, according to those who administered the test,

- students had a positive attitude, were motivated and made an effort to do well;
- a large number of students made themselves understood even if they made mistakes;
- some students were able to use written language to understand or produce oral language; for example, several students seemed to be comfortable with the idea of writing down what they were going to say;
- they correctly used several sentence structures learned in class.

On the other hand, the committee is concerned about some of the results. For example, there should to be a better use of verb tenses in oral communication and within various contexts. Given the good results for written verbs (see p. 31, in the section dealing with writing skills), teaching strategies geared to transferring written knowledge to oral knowledge should perhaps be introduced.

Those who administered the tests also noted that there were large discrepancies among the groups that were assessed. Since the results are only valid for students as a whole and do not directly apply to each school concerned, it would perhaps be useful to encourage every school offering Basic French courses to set up a formative evaluation system in order to be able to identify and meet the particular needs of their students.

According to those who administered the tests, several students had oral comprehension problems when given instructions. Why did students have trouble understanding what was required of them? Do all teachers have the necessary language skills to teach this course? Is French used to give instructions in class? How much French is used by the student and the teacher in an authentic communication context? Does the student have the opportunity to hear a variety of models?

Finally, the committee wonders if certain students were nervous, which would have an influence on results. Have students undergone such assessments before? How are assessments of speaking skills carried out in class? Do teachers have the resources (time, equipment, space) to adequately assess speaking skills?

Speaking Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results*	Acceptable Rate**	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: **General Questions** Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	31	77	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs	50	67	Unsatisfactory
Part 2: **Description** Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communidated	49	74	Unsatisfactory
	Pronunciation	53	70	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs • present tense • future tense	56 16	63 63	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure (affirmative and negative)	79	62	Very satisfactory
Part 3: **Role-playing** Students asks questions in an interview context.	Ideas communicated	61	74	Unsatisfactory
	Intonation	71	71	Satisfactory
	Sentence structure (interrogative)	25	63	Unsatisfactory

* Actual results: percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements (performance standard). All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (191), except for the following evaluation criteria:

- description - pronunciation: 181 students; verbs in the present tense: 167 students; verbs in the future tense: 172 students; sentence structure (affirmative and negative): 182 students.
- role-playing - intonation: 190 students.

** Acceptable rate: minimum percentage of students in the province who needed to meet the curriculum requirements (the performance standard) for the criterion in order for the results to be considered acceptable.

Speaking Skills / Senior 1

Distribution (%)* of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale**			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 1: **General Questions** Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	NA	31	69	NA
	Verbs	NA	50	50	NA
Part 2: **Description** Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	NA	49	51	NA
	Pronunciation	12	41	46	1
	Verbs • present tense • future tense	NA NA	56 16	44 84	NA NA
	Sentence structure (affirmative and negative)	NA	79	12	8
Part 3: **Role-playing** Student asks questions in an interview context.	Ideas communicated	5	56	29	10
	Intonation	NA	71	25	4
	Sentence structure (interrogative)	NA	25	62	13

* Percentages were rounded off and therefore the total for each criterion is not always 100%.

All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (191), except for the following evaluation criteria:

- description - pronunciation: 181 students; verbs in the present tense: 167 students; verbs in the future tense: 172 students; sentence structure (affirmative and negative): 182 students.
- role-playing - intonation: 190 students.

** Definition of the symbols used:

P+ The student exceeds curriculum requirements.
P The student meets curriculum requirements (performance standard).
P- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has some difficulty.
P– The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has a great deal of difficulty.
NA Not applicable for this criterion.

Part 1: General Questions

In this part of the test, students were required to answer five general questions (for example, "What do you do after dinner?"). They could answer using one or two simple sentences. Students were not informed of the evaluation criteria for this part of the test so that the conversation would be more or less authentic. In order to pass, students had to express their ideas clearly in French and correctly conjugate the verbs they used.

The committee feels that this part of the test was easy and that the evaluation criteria were realistic because students should have known the vocabulary and structures needed to reply adequately. Therefore, the results are quite disappointing. Students had difficulty with vocabulary and verb tenses, and their sentence structure was sometimes incomplete. Some students were not able to answer the questions.

Are students in the habit of talking about themselves in French? Have they had sufficient opportunity to practice speaking in authentic communication situations? Since several students answered in incomplete sentences or did not answer at all, does it mean that they are afraid to take risks or that they did not understand the questions?

Speaking Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: General Questions Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	31	77	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs	50	67	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	NA	31	69	NA
	Verbs	NA	50	50	NA

Part 2: Description of the Pictures

In this part of the test, students were required to describe what they saw in two pictures and to make predictions. They were to use verbs in the present, past or future tenses, as required by the situation.

Although the committee is very satisfied that 79% of students achieved the performance standard for affirmative and negative sentence structures, it is not completely satisfied with the results obtained for ideas communicated, pronunciation and verbs in the present tense. In addition, it is not at all satisfied with the results of verbs in the future tense. As for verbs in the past tense, it is impossible to draw any conclusions because too many students said little or nothing during this stage of the test.

As well as indicating a weakness in speaking skills, it is possible that the results are also due to a weakness in listening skills which might had led to a misunderstanding of the situation or instructions.

In addition, perhaps the students' weakness regarding verbs comes from an inability to transfer knowledge or from a lack of experience in this type of oral task, since they did well in this criteria for the writing skills test.

Speaking Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	49	74	Unsatisfactory
	Pronunciation	53	70	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs • present tense	56	63	Unsatisfactory
	• future tense	16	63	
	Sentence structure (affirmative and negative)	79	62	Very satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	NA	49	51	NA
	Pronunciation	12	41	46	1
	Verbs • au présent	NA	56	44	NA
	• au futur	NA	16	84	NA
	Sentence structure (affirmative and negative)	NA	79	12	8

Part 3: Role-playing

For the last part of the test, students participated in role-playing. Each student played the part of a restaurant manager and had to ask questions to someone who wanted to work in the restaurant. In order to pass, the student had to ask at least five questions. According to those who administered the test, students enjoyed this activity:

- the nature and purpose of the task drew the students in; even the weakest among them had the opportunity to clarify their questions during the role-play;

- the students' interest and enthusiasm demonstrated their desire to learn.

During the activity, 71% of students used good intonation for at least five questions. This result is satisfactory. As for ideas communicated, the results are almost satisfactory: 61% of students asked at least five questions, the majority of which were clear and complete. However, only 25% of students achieved the performance standard for sentence structure. According to the markers, several students had a tendency to reproduce the structures found on the form given to them. Did students have difficulty because they ask few questions in class? When they speak, is it mainly to answer the teacher's questions? It is possible that the performance standard was not set at a realistic level because the student was asked to use good sentence structure for at least five questions. The student who asked only five questions was not allowed to make one single structural error.

Speaking / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 3: Role-playing Student asks questions in an interview context.	Ideas communicated	61	74	Unsatisfactory
	Intonation	71	71	Satisfactory
	Sentence structure (interrogative)	25	63	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 3: Role-playing Students asks questions in an interview contexte.	Ideas communicated	5	56	29	10
	Intonation	NA	71	25	4
	Sentence structure (interrogative)	NA	25	62	13

Speaking Skills / Senior 4 / Comments of the committee responsible for interpreting the results

Overall Results

The committee is very satisfied with the results of Senior 4 speaking skills. There was a sufficient or more than sufficient number of students who achieved the performance standard for almost all of the evaluation criteria. For two of the four parts of the test, they were able to communicate their ideas adequately. In addition, they achieved the performance standard for verbs in the present tense as well as for sentence structure. Students also had good pronunciation. In addition, the committee notes several comments made by those who administered the test. According to the latter, the students' desire to learn was apparent. Several took risks and corrected themselves. Moreover, students had a good understanding of oral instructions.

Although the students' spoken competence is essentially positive, there are not enough students who are able to use verbs in the past and future tenses or who can communicate their ideas in certain situations. Did students have enough opportunity to communicate their ideas in various situations, allowing them to practice and perfect different skills?

Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results*	Acceptable Rate**	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: General Questions Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	75	82	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs	76	71	Very satisfactory
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	88	79	Very satisfactory
	Pronunciation	84	75	Very satisfactory
	Verbs • present tense	66	68	Satisfactory
	• past tense	31		
	• future tense	28	68	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure	81	68	Very satisfactory
Part 3: Individual presentation Student gives an individual presentation in which he or she must present and justify three wishes or dreams.	Ideas communicated	48	75	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs (conditional tense)	This criterion was eliminated due to insufficient data.		
	Sentence structure	76	66	Very satisfactory
Part 4: Discussion Four students enter into a discussion requiring them to agree on a choice of three wishes or dreams they would like to see come true.	Ideas communicated	73	73	Satisfactory

* Actual Results: percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements (performance standard). All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (131), except for the following evaluation criteria:
- description - verbs in the past tense: 125 students; verbs in the future tense: 128 students.

** Acceptable rate: minimum percentage of students in the province who needed to meet or exceed curriculum requirements (the performance standard) for the criterion in order for the results to be considered acceptable.

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Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Distribution (%)* of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale**			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 1: General Questions Student answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Ideas communicated	NA	75	25	NA
	Verbs	NA	76	24	NA
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	NA	88	12	NA
	Pronunciation	34	50	16	0
	Verbs • present tense • past tense • future tense	NA NA NA	66 31 28	34 69 72	NA NA NA
	Sentence structure	NA	81	15	5
Part 3: Individual presentation Student gives an individual presentation in which he or she must present and justify three wishes or dreams.	Ideas communicated	7	41	21	31
	Verbs (conditional tense)	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Sentence structure	NA	76	13	12
Part 4: Discussion Four students enter into a discussion requiring them to agree on a choice of three wishes or dreams they would like to see come true.	Ideas communicated	49	24	17	10

* Percentages were rounded off and therefore the total for each criterion is not always 100%.

All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (131), except for the following evaluation criteria:

- description - verbs in the past tense: 125 students; verbs in the future tense: 128 students.

** Definition of the symbols used:

P+ The student exceeds curriculum requirements.
P The student meets curriculum requirements (performance standard).
P- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has some difficulty.
P-- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has a great deal of difficulty.
NA Not applicable for this criterion.

Part 1: General Questions

In this part of the test, students were required to answer five questions of a general nature. They would pass if they answered with a sentence containing one or two clauses. In general, the verbs used were in the present tense.

The committee is very satisfied with the results obtained for the verbs: 76% of students achieved the performance standard. They used the appropriate tense and form for at least three of the five answers. In addition, approximately one third of the students got a score of five. These students made no errors.

Because the activity was relatively easy, the committee had hoped that a greater number of students would be able to adequately communicate their ideas. However, 75% of students did achieve the performance standard. In addition, according to the markers, several students gave elaborate answers (having at least 3 clauses). On the other hand, there were students who answered in incomplete sentences.

Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: General Questions	Ideas communicated	75	82	Unsatisfactory
Students answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Verbs	76	71	Very satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 1: General Questions	Ideas communicated	NA	75	25	NA
Students answers 5 questions of a general nature.	Verbs	NA	76	24	NA

Part 2: Description of the Pictures

In this part of the test, students were required to describe what they saw in two pictures and to make predictions. The committee is very satisfied with the results for three of the evaluation criteria:

- 88% of students communicated their ideas well,
- 84% used adequate pronunciation,
- 81% used correct sentence structure (at least 75% of the time).

In addition, the committee is satisfied with the results for the use of present tense verbs. However, it is not satisfied with the results concerning the correct use of past and future tense verbs. Does this weakness stem from the possibility that students might not have had enough opportunity to use these tenses in context?

Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Total percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	88	79	Very satisfactory
	Pronunciation	84	75	Very satisfactory
	Verbs • present tense	66	68	Satisfactory
	• past tense	31		Unsatisfactory
	• future tense	28	68	
	Sentence structure	81	68	Very satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 2: Description Student describes what he or she sees in two pictures.	Ideas communicated	NA	88	12	NA
	Pronunciation	34	50	16	0
	Verbs • present tense	NA	66	34	NA
	• past tense	NA	31	69	NA
	• future tense	NA	28	72	NA
	Sentence structure	NA	81	15	5

Part 3: Individual Presentation

In order to achieve the performance standard in the third part of the test, students needed to present or justify three wishes or dreams. Several of those who administered the test had the impression that students were not accustomed to this type of activity. What effect did that have on the results?

Only 48% of students communicated well. According to the markers, these students had good ideas and had the necessary vocabulary to express them. Why were there not more students who were able to present and justify their points of view? Why were the students able to communicate their ideas in the second and fourth parts of the test? Does the task itself cause the weakness in the third part? Do students have sufficient opportunity to present and justify their points of view? Should their ability to understand and send out messages be further developed within different communication situations?

Despite the poor results for ideas communicated, the committee is very satisfied with the results for sentence structure.

The committee decided to eliminate the criterion for conditional verbs because of insufficient numbers: several students did not use this tense or used it very little. Students were not told that they needed to use the conditional tense. This indicates one of the problems associated with the assessment of specific linguistic elements within a situation in which students can use a variety of strategies and linguistic knowledge to make themselves understood.

Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 3: **Individual Presentation** Student gives an individual presentation in which he or she must present and justify three wishes or dreams.	Ideas communicated	48	75	Unsatisfactory
	Verbs (conditional)	This criterion was eliminated due to insufficient data.		
	Sentence structure	76	66	Very satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evalation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 3: **Individual Presentation** Student gives an individual presentation in wich he or she must present and justify three wishes or dreams.	Ideas communicated	7	41	21	31
	Verbs (conditional)	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Sentence structure	NA	76	13	12

Part 4: Discussion

In Part 4, students participated in a discussion requiring them to agree on a choice of three wishes or dreams they would like to see come true. They were assessed individually. To achieve the performance standard, at least 66% of their contribution had to be understandable.

The committee is satisfied with the results: 73% of students achieved or exceeded test requirements. However, those who administered the test remarked that several students did not seem used to this type of activity and did not know how to participate in a discussion. It is important to note that the evaluation criterion only verified if students' ideas were understood, not their ability to participate in a discussion. What does this ability consist of? Can the new Basic French curricula determine the objectives to be aimed for during a discussion?

In addition, it should be noted that 50% of students expressed four ideas or less. Was this participation in the discussion adequate?

Speaking Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 4: Discussion Four students enter into a discussion requiring them to agree on a choice of three wishes or dreams they would like to see come true.	Ideas Communicated	73	73	Satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P- -
Part 4: Discussion Four students enter into a discussion requiring them to agree on a choice of three wishes or dreams they would like to see come true.	Ideas communicated	49	24	17	10

Writing Skills / Senior 1 / Comments of the committee responsible for interpreting the results

Overall Results

The committee is satisfied with the results of the first part of the test. However, it feels that there were not enough students who achieved the performance standard for the second and third parts.

It was found that students did quite well at activities in a limited context:

- writing simple sentences using given elements;
- spelling and making verbs agree in these sentences.

On the other hand, a good number of students had difficulty doing well at activities that required using their knowledge in a much larger context:

- writing a short paragraph to the teacher following precise instructions;
- writing a letter introducing him or herself.

Despite the difficulties, several students showed strengths:

- several expressed their ideas in an understandable manner;
- they showed linguistic perceptiveness;
- they showed spontaneity in the ideas they communicated;
- they were creative.

However, the committee hopes that the number of students who showed these strengths will increase.

In addition, too many students showed weaknesses. For example:

- there were too many anglicisms in the texts;
- too many students did not seem to have learned basic skills: they did not seem able to use grammatical elements that should have been learned before Senior 1;
- students did not use structures and vocabulary that should have been learned in Senior 1;
- several students did not seem to take the activity seriously.

Taking into account the students' weaknesses in the second and third parts of the test, it is hoped that the new Bureau de l'éducation française curricula will contain not only a list of objectives and learning content relating to communication but also ways to facilitate the work of teachers in matters of planning, intervention and evaluation. In addition, it is possible that school divisions need to offer teachers professional development regarding communication within varied situations. Otherwise, the abilities of students may not improve.

Writing Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Students Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results*	Acceptable Rate**	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: **Sentences** Student writes nine sentences using known elements.	Ideas communicated	73	70	Satisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - spelling and conjugaison of verbs	67	62	Very satisfactory
Part 2: **Note** Student writes a paragraph following precise instructions.	Ideas communicated	43	62	Unsatisfactory
Part 3: **Letter** Student writes a letter introducing him or herself.	Ideas communicated	64	68	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	44	58	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	44	55	Unsatisfactory

* Actual Results: percentage of students who met or exceeded the curriculum requirements (performance standard).
All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (374).

** Acceptable rate: minimum percentage of students in the province who needed to meet or exceed curriculum requirements (performance standard) for the criterion in order for the results to be considered acceptable.

Writing Skills / Senior 1

Distribution (%)* of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale**			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 1: **Sentences** Student writes nine sentences using known elements.	Ideas communicated	25	48	19	9
	Spelling and agreements - spelling and conjugation of verbs	33	33	20	14
Part 2: **Note** Student writes a paragraph following precise instructions.	Ideas communicated	11	32	48	9
Part 3: **Letter** Student writes a letter introducing him or herself.	Ideas communicated	5	59	25	11
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	12	32	51	5
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	10	34	52	5

* Percentages were rounded off and therefore the total for each criterion is not always 100%.

** Definition of the symbols used:
- P+ The student exceeds curriculum requirements.
- P The student meets curriculum requirements (performance standard).
- P- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has some difficulty.
- P-- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has a great deal of difficulty.
- NA Not applicable for this criterion.

Part 1: Writing nine sentences

In this part of the test, students were asked to write nine sentences using elements given to them in the test. Each sentence was independent of the others. A sentence that was well written needed to be logical and properly structured. In addition, each sentence had to contain a verb that students had to spell correctly and conjugate either in the present, perfect or near future tenses. The committee believes that this part of the test resembles activities that students probably did in class. Students were not required to be creative. Rather, a model was provided.

The first part of the test was the easiest and most successful. The majority of students had no problem creating sentences. They used a good choice of subjects and knew how to join the elements to make logical sentences. However, several students had a tendency to repeat the same elements too often. Others wrote nothing. Regarding the other criterion, 67% of students conjugated and spelled verbs correctly in the required tenses.

Writing Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: Sentences Student writes nine sentences using known elements.	Ideas communicated	73	70	Satisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - spelling and conjugation of verbs	67	62	Very Satisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 1: Sentences Student writes nine sentences using known elements.	Ideas communicated	25	48	19	9
	Spelling and agreements - spelling and conjugation of verbs	33	33	20	14

Part 2: Note

The aim of this part of the test was to see if students could write a paragraph following precise directions. Students had to write a short note to their teacher within the context of a specific situation. The marking scale developed for this part of the test allowed the marker to verify each of the four elements required in relation to the ideas communicated. In fact, students were required to:

- indicate the problem,
- say why,
- offer an apology,
- suggest another date.

For each element, the marker verified whether the message was understandable. Although the required element could contain errors of vocabulary, syntax, spelling or agreement, if any of these errors hindered comprehension of the message, the student was penalized.

The committee is not satisfied with this part of the test. Although 43% of students were able to communicate their ideas, several showed a number of weaknesses: their ideas lacked clarity or were incoherent, or sometimes a clearly expressed idea was followed by other incomprehensible elements.

In addition, students did not always follow instructions. Were instructions always clear? For example, students had difficulty with "indicate the problem." Almost 30% of students did not include this element in their message. In addition, 52% of students did not succeed in "offering an apology," either because they forgot to include this element or because they misunderstood what was required and made an excuse instead. It is possible that there was a problem with an incorrect transfer of knowledge from English to French. [Translator's note: in French, to offer an apology is "faire des excuses" and to make an excuse is "inventer une excuse."]

It is also possible that many students did not succeed at this activity because they were never required to communicate in French in such situations. What should teachers do to ensure that students can transfer the knowledge learned in one context to other contexts? If this question of the transfer of knowledge is not taken up in the new curricula as well as in the professional development of teachers, students may not be able to express themselves in written form even in simple situations.

Writing Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 2: **Note** Students writes a paragraph following precise directions.	Ideas communicated	43	62	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Sutdent's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 2: **Note** Students writes a paragraph following precise directions.	Ideas communicated	11	32	48	9

Part 3: Letter Writing

In this part of the test, students were required to write a letter to a correspondent. They had to introduce themselves: age, interests, hobbies, family, etc. The markers were looking for three criteria:

- ideas communicated,
- sentence structure and vocabulary,
- spelling and agreement.

Regarding the ideas communicated, the markers looked at the general quality of the letter. To achieve the performance standard, students had to communicate fairly well. On the whole, their message had to be understandable despite the fact that several errors were allowed in the text.

As for the other criteria (sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and agreements), the marker gave a mark according to the number of errors in the text. The longer the text, the more errors the student was allowed to make.

In general, the committee was not satisfied with the results. In addition to having noted the poor results, the committee noted several of the markers' comments. In their opinion, although several students were creative, for the most part they used very simple vocabulary and structures. They mainly used elements of the language taught before Senior 1. Few students took any risks. Several filled their page with lists, such as the names of all their friends. There was also difficulty with spelling and agreements. Students seemed to have forgotten simple rules. It is also possible that they did not reread their texts in order to improve them and to correct grammatical mistakes.

The poor results for this part of the test raise several questions. Why were students not capable of applying their knowledge within a fairly open communication situation? Are students used to introducing themselves in written form? Are students used to communicating within a framework that does not have fixed structures, thus requiring greater creativity and autonomy? Do teachers know how to facilitate a transfer of knowledge? Would the results have been different had students been given a list of the evaluation criteria? Further, would students have known how to use this list to correct their own work? Did the fact that students could not use dictionaries or other reference tools have an effect on the results?

Writing Skills / Senior 1

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 3: Letter Student writes a letter introducing him or herself.	Ideas communicated	64	68	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	44	58	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and congugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	44	55	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 3: Letter Student writes a letter introducing him or herself.	Ideas communicated	5	59	25	11
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	12	32	51	5
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	10	34	52	5

Writing Skills / Senior 4 / Comments of the committee responsible for interpreting the results

Overall results

The committee is not satisfied with the results of the Writing Skills test in Senior 4. Although there was a more than sufficient number of students who succeeded in organizing their ideas within a narrative text, there were few students who succeeded in meeting the other criteria evaluated in this test. The terminal objectives of the Writing Skills section in the curriculum (see page 4) indicate that Senior 4 students should know how to write letters and narrative texts with good sentence structure, vocabulary and spelling. The test results suggest that there are not enough students in the province who meet curriculum terminal objectives regarding writing skills.

Despite poor results, many students succeeded in:

- making themselves understood;
- showing much imagination and creativity;
- showing spontaneity;
- mastering standard vocabulary;
- organizing their ideas well.

Although more than half of the students achieved the performance standard for ideas communicated, a much greater number should have met this criterion. In addition, too many students had poor vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, and agreements and were unable to write an official letter.

According to the markers, there was sometimes a lack of seriousness on the part of certain students who added sarcastic elements to their texts. Certain students could have improved their texts using strategies such as circumlocution. Students also sometimes used English when they could have used a simple French structure.

Would students have been more successful if they had been informed of the evaluation criteria? Students should be told what the objectives are and how they will be assessed.

During the test, students had access to dictionaries. Did that have an effect on the results? Do students know how to use this tool?

Was the assessment situation congruent with classroom learning situations? Did students place less importance on this test, knowing that the results would not count toward the final mark in the course? Did the teacher's attitude toward the test influence the results?

The committee also notes that two criteria (sentence structure and vocabulary as well as spelling and agreements) placed an emphasis on errors because the students' results were determined by the number of errors they made. The longer the text, the more mistakes students were allowed to make. Does this type of marking seek to penalize students who make mistakes rather than

reward those who make an effort and take risks? For example, if a student took no risks and wrote accurately using structures taught in Senior 1, he or she would have received a good score. However, the student who could write using Senior 1 structures and who, in addition, made the effort to use more complicated structures even if he or she sometimes made mistakes, ran the risk of getting a lower score. A method of marking that would give students credit for the correct use of structures, vocabulary, spelling and agreements should perhaps be found.

Has the important question of the role of grammar in communication been sufficiently discussed with teachers? Should this aspect of language teaching be clarified in the new curricula?

Writing Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results*	Acceptable Rate**	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: **Letter** Student writes a letter to a hotel regarding a specific situation.	Ideas communicated	62	76	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	44	66	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	46	63	Unsatisfactory
	The parts of an official letter	40	77	Unsatisfactory
Part 2 : **Expressive composition** Student composes a paragraph expressing his or her opinion on the value or money.	Ideas communicated	55	77	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	46	65	Unsatisfactory
Part 3: **Narrative composition** Student composes a narrative paragraph relating a trip.	Ideas communicated	63	78	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	32	64	Unsatisfactory
	Organization of ideas	**80**	**72**	**Very satisfactory**

* Actual Results: percentage of students who met or exceeded the curriculum requirements (performance standard).
All percentages were calculated according to the number of students in the sample population (227).

** Acceptable rate: minimum percentage of students in the province who needed to meet or exceed curriculum requirements (performance standard) for the criterion in order for the results to be considered acceptable.

Writing Skills / Senior 4

Distribution (%)* of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale**			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 1: **Letter** Student writes a letter to a hotel regarding a specific situation.	Ideas communicated	3	59	32	6
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	19	25	55	2
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	11	35	53	2
	The parts of an official letter	NA	40	59	2
Part 2: **Expressive composition** Student composes a paragraph expressing his or her opinion on the value of money.	Ideas communicated	7	48	38	7
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	18	28	51	3
Part 3: **Narrative composition** Student composes a narrative paragraph relating a trip.	Ideas communicated	5	58	26	11
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	7	25	62	7
	Organization of ideas	NA	80	13	7

* Percentages were rounded off and therefore the total for each criterion is not always 100%.

** Definition of the symbols used:

P+ The student exceeds curriculum requirements.
P The student meets curriculum requirements (performance standard).
P- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has some difficulty.
P-- The student does not meet curriculum requirements. He or she has a great deal of difficulty.
NA Not applicable for this criterion.

Part 1: Letter writing

Students were required to write a letter to a hotel manager regarding a specific situation. In order to successfully accomplish this task, the students needed to understand the situation. However, it is impossible for the committee to determine the extent to which the results were influenced by the students' understanding (or lack of understanding) of the instructions and of the situation. In addition, in the committee's opinion, the situation given to the students was not within the realm of their experience. For example, few Senior 4 students have the opportunity to write letters to cancel or change hotel reservations. In addition, several details were given to the students that could have been useful in understanding the situation. However, it was not necessary to include these elements in the letter. Did this confuse certain students? Have they had enough social experience to make a distinction between important and inessential details?

Despite these concerns, the committee recognizes that 62% of students communicated either very well or quite well. On the whole, their letters were comprehensible, even though they contained a few errors. According to the markers, these students, in general, understood the problem and made an effort to solve it. Students should be congratulated for their creativity.

However, the results for the following elements were poor:

- the parts of an official letter;
- grammar (verbs, agreements, structures).

The committee thinks that students in this grade can and should learn how to write an official letter. However, because there are several contradictory models of letters in the presently available didactic material, a teacher could legitimately wonder which one to teach. It would be useful for teachers to be brought up to date on the essential elements of an official letter: the addresses of the addressee and the sender, the date, a greeting, a closing, and the use of the formal "you." Nonetheless, a certain amount of flexibility should be given regarding the other elements, as they can change; for example, requirements for data processing or for Canada Post.

Moreover, students should learn to use their knowledge of grammar to write a letter.

Writing Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Desccription of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interpretation of Results
Part 1: **Letter** Student writes a letter to a hotel regarding a specific situation.	Ideas communicated	62	76	Unsatisfactory
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	44	66	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and ajective with noun - gender	46	63	Unsatisfactory
	The parts of an official letter	40	69	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P–
Part 1: **Letter** Student writes a letter to a hotel regarding a specific situation.	Ideas communicated	3	59	32	6
	Sentence structure and vocabulary	19	25	55	2
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	11	35	53	2
	The parts of an official letter	NA	40	59	2

Part 2: Expressive composition

For this part of the test, students were to express their opinion on the value of money. Knowing how to write an expressive composition was not one of the terminal objectives of the writing skills section of the curriculum as such. However, this ability was a requirement of the speaking skills section (to give an opinion, justify an argument) and it was hoped that students could transfer their knowledge from one situation to another.

In fact, more than half of the students were able to express an opinion and they had good ideas. Moreover, they showed sensibility and a sense of humour. However, 45% of students either lacked ideas and vocabulary or had difficulty in expressing abstract ideas. Is the difficulty in expressing abstract ideas due to a lack of vocabulary, to the fact that students are translating from their mother tongue or to a lack of structures? The new curricula should perhaps suggest a way to facilitate the transfer of oral knowledge to writing. In addition, the curricula could underline the important role of expressive written speech.

Writing Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interepretation of Results
Part 2: Expressive composition	Ideas communicated	55	77	Unsatisfactory
Student composes a paragraph expressing his or her opinion on the value of money.	Sentence structure and vocabulary	46	65	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of sutdents accding to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 2: Expressive composition	Ideas communicated	7	48	38	7
Student compose a paragraph expressing his or her opinion on the value of money.	Sentence structure and vocabulary	18	28	51	3

Part 3: Narrative composition

In this part of the test, students were required to tell about a trip that they had taken. The committee questions whether the subject chosen for this part of the test took into account the different socio-economic situations of the students. Despite this comment, the committee reports that 63% of students were able to write about an experience that was either personal and true, or one that was imaginary. In fact, those that had never taken a trip were able to make one up. According to the markers, the texts showed creativity and humour. In addition, 80% of students were able to coherently organize their ideas. In general, their train of thought was easy to follow. However, too many students had problems with spelling and agreements. In particular, verb tenses were either poorly chosen or had incorrect agreements.

Writing Skills / Senior 4

Percentage of students who met or exceeded curriculum requirements

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Actual Results	Acceptable Rate	Committee's Interprentation of Results
Part 3: Narrative composition Student composes a narrative paragraph relating a trip.	Ideas communicated	63	78	Unsatisfactory
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	32	64	Unsatisfactory
	Organization of ideas	80	72	Unsatisfactory

Distribution (%) of students according to the descriptive scale

Description of Student's Tasks	Evaluation Criteria	Descriptive Scale			
		P+	P	P-	P--
Part 3: Narrative composition Student composes a narrative paragraph relating a trip.	Ideas communicated	5	58	26	11
	Spelling and agreements - standard spelling - spelling and conjugation of verbs - agreement of qualifier and adjective with noun - gender	7	25	62	7
	Organization of ideas	NA	80	13	7

Chapter Four

CONCLUSIONS

The committee responsible for evaluating the results is satisfied with the speaking skills in Senior 4. However, it is not satisfied with the speaking skills in Senior 1 nor with the writing skills in Senior 1 and 4. The committee drew these conclusions following a study of the results for each part of the four tests.

The committee acknowledges that the students' results are only valid **at a provincial level** and do not necessarily reflect the situation in every Basic French class in Manitoba. Every school division and school involved with the Basic French program should study their own situation in order to better define the strengths and weaknesses of their students and to implement the appropriate recommendations.

Despite the poor results for the province as a whole, the committee feels that the situation regarding Basic French in Manitoba has some **positive aspects** that can be emphasized in order to improve students' abilities. In particular, the committee noted that:

- Senior 1 and 4 students who participated in the speaking skills assessment had a positive attitude toward the French language;
- Senior 1 and 4 students know how to correctly use sentence structures (affirmative and negative) in speech;
- Senior 1 students have good intonation when asking questions;
- Senior 4 students have good pronunciation;
- Senior 4 students are able to correctly use verbs in the present tense when speaking;
- Senior 4 students are able to communicate their ideas in certain spoken contexts;
- Senior 4 students know how to organize their ideas in a narrative composition;
- Senior 1 students are able to join known elements to compose written sentences;
- Senior 1 students can correctly use verbs in structured written exercises.

Regarding **weak points**, the committee noted that there were not enough students who:

- are able to communicate their ideas in every situation given in the tests;
- can correctly use adequate vocabulary and sentence structure in written communication situations;
- can correctly apply rules concerning spelling and agreements in communication situations.

Before discussing the recommendations, it would be useful to review **several of the questions raised by this assessment project**:

- What importance is given to French as a second language by students, parents, the school, and by each community that students belong to?
- Do Basic French teachers for all grades have a functional knowledge of the language? Are there teachers who were obligated to accept this position despite the fact that they did not feel at ease in all French teaching situations?
- How much teaching is going on in French?
- Are school divisions offering the appropriate support to teachers so that they:
  - have access to the professional development that meets their needs,
  - have access to adequate didactic materials,
  - are able to share their knowledge and skills with other colleagues,
  - can use a variety of materials and resources to meet curriculum objectives,
  - can study and apply the strategies that facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one learning situation to another?
- Does the training offered to teachers allow them to understand and use an integrated teaching approach, that is, a contextual approach that develops the ability to communicate a message and that includes the teaching of code?
- To what extent does the students' difficulty in speaking or writing come from a possible weakness in listening or reading?
- What can be done to use the strengths that Senior 4 students have in speaking skills to develop their writing abilities?

- Should any importance be given to the fact that Basic French is often compulsory at the Senior 1 level but optional at Senior 4?

- Did the choice of subjects (for example, a trip) assigned to the students during the test influence the results?

- Should students have received more information concerning the evaluation criteria?

- Is the students' weakness regarding vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling and agreements linked to their ability to evaluate themselves?

- What importance should be given to the fact that students who take risks can be penalized for errors of vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling and agreements?

- What can be done to encourage students to use the structures, vocabulary and grammatical elements that are supposed to be learned in their grade?

- What importance should be given to the fact that Senior 4 students do not seem to be accustomed to having discussions?

- What efforts have been made by school divisions to follow *National Core French Study* recommendations?

The last question is possibly the most important because the *National Core French Study* offers several suggestions and solutions to current problems in Basic French teaching.

Chapter Five

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations take into account both the results of the tests and the questions raised by the assessment project. In reading them, educators will realize that they are already putting into practice some of the recommendations. In fact, because a number of the results are acceptable, several educational practices that are already in place should be continued. **It is also possible that the recommendations will help educators determine the specific needs of their class or region.** Everyone involved in the development of the ability to communicate is invited to take note of what he or she is doing well and what he or she can do better.

Therefore, the technical committee responsible for evaluating the results is making the following recommendations:

- **To the Bureau de l'éducation française:**

  - that the curriculum being developed by the Bureau de l'éducation française reflect an even greater communicative/experiential orientation, while emphasizing the teaching of language in context. In order to do this, it is recommended that the Bureau de l'éducation française base itself on the *National Core French Study* reports;

  - that the curriculum be geared toward oral speech and authenticity of communication, also including written work so that speaking and writing work together;

  - that the Bureau de l'éducation française facilitate access to authentic documents (for example, it could inform teachers of existing sources);

  - that the new curricula place importance on formative assessment so that teachers are able to identify and meet the needs of students;

  - that provincial assessments exclude elements that put one or more socio-economic groups at a disadvantage; for example, because not all students are able to take a trip, giving them a choice of subjects could help eliminate the possibility that the results are influenced by socio-economic factors;

  - that provincial assessments include methods of marking that give value to what students know how to do and that encourages them to take risks and be creative;

  - that the measurement instruments used during a provincial assessment be developed and presented in such a way that students can be made more aware of the evaluation criteria;

- **To Basic French teachers:**

  - that they take every available opportunity to participate in professional development sessions offered by their school divisions, the province and universities;

  - that they commit themselves to teaching French in French;

  - that they inform students of the curriculum objectives and evaluation criteria used to test their abilities;

  - that they create authentic, pertinent and varied communication situations;

  - that they create situations that require students to put the writing process into practice (brainstorming, outline, rough draft, editing, final draft);

  - that they encourage students to develop a concern for well-written language;

  - that they encourage students to take risks regarding the use and accuracy of the language;

  - that they encourage spontaneity and creativity in students;

  - that they encourage students to use the vocabulary, structures and grammatical elements that they should have acquired for their grade level;

  - that they help students to correctly use verbs in the past and future tenses in oral communication situations;

  - that they emphasize the vocabulary used in oral communication situations;

  - that they encourage students to have discussions (debates, presentations, group work, etc.);

  - that they work on students' oral comprehension by using activities that promote comprehension and by teaching students learning strategies;

  - that they use formative assessment in order to be able to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses;

  - that they create situations that favour cooperative learning in order to encourage students to assess their own languge and communication skills;

- **To the school divisions and principals involved:**

  - that they set up ways of identifying students' abilities in order to be able to meet the needs of the learners;

  - that they ensure that teachers have the necessary linguistic and pedagogical abilities to teach a second language;

  - that they create situations favouring teacher training; in particular, that they organize teachers' meetings for the following reasons:

    - to exchange ideas and strategies for the classroom,

    - to find ways that will help students use their knowledge in authentic, appropriate and varied communication situations;

  - that they set up professional development opportunities in the following areas:

    - the transfer of knowledge from one learning situation to another,

    - the importance of the grammatical code in communication;

  - that they ensure that teachers have access to adequate didactic materials;

  - that they review the recommendations in the *National Core French Study* and assess themselves in order to find out to what extent these recommendations apply to their situation;

- **To faculties of education:**

  - that they offer initial training and further training courses, based on the Basic French curricula as well as the *National Core French Study*;

- **To students:**

  - that they be responsible for their learning;

  - that they take the opportunity to communicate in oral and written speech in authentic, appropriate and varied situations;

  - that they go over their texts to correct elements they are already familiar with;

- that they pay more attention to past and future tense verbs in communication situations;
- that they express complete ideas.

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Government of Manitoba, Department of Education and Training, Bureau de l'éducation française. *Programme d'études de Français de base, programme de 9 ans, 7e, 8e et 9e anneés.* Winnipeg: Bureau de l'éducation française, 1988.

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It is also highly recommended to refer to any publication concerning the *National Core French Study*. For example:

The Canadian Modern Language Review, Vol. 47, No. 1, October, 1990.